

Complaints & Grievance Policy

Policy Owner: Oksana Logvynenko, CEO

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PART A: COMPLAINTS POLICY (For Service Users/Participants)

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy sets out how Culturalinks Community CIC will handle complaints from service users, participants, community members, partners, and other external stakeholders. We are committed to providing high-quality services and welcome feedback to help us improve.

1.2 Policy Statement

Culturalinks Community CIC views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve our services. We are committed to:

- Providing a fair complaints procedure that is clear and easy to use
- Publicizing the existence of our complaints procedure so people know how to contact us
- Ensuring all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely manner
- Resolving complaints as quickly as possible
- Gathering information to help us improve our services

1.3 Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of Culturalinks Community CIC's services, activities, staff, volunteers, or the organization itself.

2. Accessibility

2.1 Making Our Complaints Process Accessible

We are committed to ensuring our complaints process is accessible to all by:

- Accepting complaints in multiple formats (written, verbal, electronic)
- Providing this policy in alternative formats upon request
- Offering language support where needed
- Making reasonable adjustments for disabled complainants
- Accepting complaints made through advocates or representatives

3. Complaints Procedure

3.1 Informal Resolution

We encourage informal resolution where possible:

- Issues raised directly with the staff member involved
- Quick resolution without formal process
- Appropriate for straightforward, easily resolved matters

3.2 Formal Complaints Process

Stage 1: Making a Complaint

- Complaints should be made within 3 months of the incident
- Complaints can be submitted:
 - By email to: [insert email]
 - By post to: [insert address]
 - By phone to: [insert number]
 - Via our website: [insert URL]
- Complaints should include:
 - Complainant's name and contact details
 - Nature of the complaint
 - Relevant dates, times, and locations
 - Names of any staff or witnesses involved
 - What outcome the complainant is seeking

Stage 2: Acknowledgment

- All complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days
- The acknowledgment will include:
 - Name of who is handling the complaint
 - Expected timeframe for response
 - How the complaint will be processed

Stage 3: Investigation

- Complaints will be investigated by an appropriate manager
- The investigator will:
 - Review all relevant documentation
 - Speak with relevant staff members
 - Speak with the complainant for clarification if needed
 - Consider similar previous cases
 - Consider relevant policies and procedures

Stage 4: Response

- A full response will be provided within 20 working days
- If this is not possible, an update will be provided explaining the delay
- The response will include:

- Outcome of the investigation
- Any actions taken or proposed
- Information about escalation if the complainant is dissatisfied

Stage 5: Appeal

- If dissatisfied with the response, complainants can appeal within 10 working days
- Appeals will be reviewed by the CEO or a Board member
- The appeal decision will be final and provided within 20 working days

3.3 Extending Timeframes

Timeframes may be extended in complex cases, but the complainant will be kept informed of progress and reasons for any delays.

4. Persistent or Vexatious Complaints

4.1 Definition

Persistent or vexatious complaints are those that:

- Persist despite the complaints procedure being fully implemented
- Seek unrealistic outcomes
- Focus on trivial matters to an unreasonable degree
- Are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- Demand excessive amounts of staff time

4.2 Managing Such Complaints

The CEO may decide to:

- Limit contact to a specific form (e.g., email only)
- Limit contact to a specific staff member
- Refuse to consider repeated complaints about the same issue
- Only acknowledge correspondence without responding in detail
- In extreme cases, cease all communication on the matter

4.3 Decision Process

- Decision to limit contact will be made by the CEO
- Complainant will be informed in writing
- Decision will be reviewed after 6 months

5. Confidentiality and Data Protection

5.1 Privacy and Confidentiality

- All complaints will be handled confidentially
- Information will only be shared with those involved in investigating and resolving the complaint
- Personal information will be protected in line with data protection legislation
- Anonymized complaint data may be used for reporting and improvement purposes

5.2 Record Keeping

We will keep records of:

- All complaints received
- Actions taken
- Decisions made
- Outcome
- Lessons learned

Records will be retained for [insert timeframe] in accordance with our data retention policy.

6. Learning from Complaints

6.1 Continuous Improvement

Culturalinks Community CIC will:

- Review complaints quarterly to identify trends
- Report on complaints to the Board of Directors annually
- Use complaints to improve services through staff training and procedural changes
- Share anonymized learning across the organization

PART B: GRIEVANCE POLICY (For Staff)

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy outlines the procedures for Culturalinks Community CIC staff to raise concerns, problems, or complaints related to their employment.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Culturalinks Community CIC, including part-time, temporary, and fixed-term employees. Volunteers are covered by a separate Volunteer Problem-Solving Procedure.

1.3 Principles

- All grievances will be taken seriously and handled fairly and consistently

- Issues will be dealt with promptly
- Employees will not suffer detriment for raising genuine grievances
- Confidentiality will be maintained to the greatest extent possible
- Informal resolution will be encouraged where appropriate

2. Informal Resolution

2.1 First Steps

Employees are encouraged to resolve workplace issues informally by:

- Speaking directly with the colleague concerned
- Discussing the matter with their line manager
- Seeking mediation if appropriate

2.2 Mediation

Mediation by a neutral third party may be suggested to help resolve issues informally. Participation is voluntary but encouraged.

3. Formal Grievance Procedure

3.1 Stage 1: Written Grievance

- Employee submits a written grievance to their line manager (or next level manager if the grievance involves the line manager)
- The grievance should include:
 - Nature of the grievance
 - Relevant facts, dates, and names
 - Any supporting evidence
 - Desired outcome or resolution
- Receipt will be acknowledged within 5 working days

3.2 Stage 2: Grievance Meeting

- A meeting will be arranged within 10 working days
- The employee has the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative
- The meeting will:
 - Allow the employee to explain their grievance and desired outcome
 - Explore the issues and gather information
 - Consider possible resolutions
- Additional investigation may be required following the meeting

3.3 Stage 3: Decision

- A written decision will be provided within 10 working days of the meeting or conclusion of the investigation

- The decision will include:
 - Findings on the grievance
 - Any actions to be taken
 - Right to appeal

3.4 Stage 4: Appeal

- Employees can appeal within 10 working days of receiving the decision
- Appeals should be in writing to the CEO or Board Chair, stating grounds for appeal
- An appeal meeting will be arranged within 15 working days
- The appeal decision is final and will be communicated in writing within 10 working days

4. Collective Grievances

4.1 Procedure

If multiple employees share the same grievance:

- They may nominate representatives to participate in the process
- The process will follow the same stages as individual grievances
- All affected employees will be informed of the outcome

5. Special Circumstances

5.1 Grievances During Disciplinary Proceedings

If a grievance is raised during disciplinary proceedings:

- Both procedures may run concurrently if the issues are unrelated
- The disciplinary procedure may be temporarily suspended if the grievance relates directly to the disciplinary matter

5.2 Grievances After Employment Has Ended

- Grievances raised after employment has ended will be considered at management discretion
- A modified procedure may be followed, potentially without meetings

5.3 Grievances Involving the CEO

Grievances involving the CEO should be submitted to the Chair of the Board, who will follow this procedure accordingly.

6. Support for Employees

6.1 Available Support

During the grievance process, employees can access:

- Confidential counseling through [insert details if available]
- Support from a nominated colleague or mentor
- Information and advice from their trade union (if applicable)

7. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

7.1 Documentation

Records will be kept of:

- The nature of the grievance
- Investigation steps taken
- Meetings held
- Decisions made
- Outcomes and actions

7.2 Confidentiality

- All grievance proceedings will be kept confidential
- Information will only be shared with those directly involved
- Records will be stored securely in line with data protection legislation

8. Monitoring and Review

8.1 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it:

- Complies with employment legislation
- Meets organizational needs
- Addresses any issues identified through its use

8.2 Reporting

Anonymous statistical information on grievances will be reported to the Board annually to:

- Monitor trends
- Identify areas for improvement
- Implement organizational learning

Common Elements for Both Policies

Implementation and Communication

Training

All managers will receive training on:

- Handling complaints and grievances
- Conducting fair investigations
- Documenting issues appropriately
- Supporting those involved

Communication

This policy will be:

- Included in staff induction materials
- Available on the organization's website
- Referenced in service user information
- Reviewed with staff annually
- Available upon request in alternative formats

Legal Framework

This policy is designed to comply with:

- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures

Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Disciplinary Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Code of Conduct

Policy Approved By:

Oksana Logvynenko, CEO

Date: 26.03.2025